

# Motivation And Involvement: Exploring Event Travel Careers Among Cyclists

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## **Aim of the research**

Previous research has examined event motivations among a sample of participants at the Tour of Flanders Cyclo, an active sport tourism event that is organised annually in conjunction with the world-famous Tour of Flanders cycling race (Derom & Ramshaw, 2016). Inspired by recent commercial partnerships between for-profit organisers of mass participation events in Europe, the objective of this current research is to further examine how 'event travel careers' develop among a sample of active sport tourists (Getz & McConnell, 2014). More specifically, differences between national and international event participants are examined. The following questions have guided this research: 1) What is the level of motivation and involvement of active cycling tourists? 2) What is the relationship between motivation and involvement and what is their effect on the development of an event travel career?

## **Theoretical background**

Millions of individuals travel internationally with the purpose of participating in active sport tourism events such as marathons. Long-distance runners have been frequently examined, in particular with respect to their motivation and involvement with running as their preferred leisure activity. Using the concept of serious leisure (Stebbins, 1992), long-distance runners with a strong athletic identification have reported a career structure that is associated with running and their participation in running events (Getz & Andersson, 2010). Marathon runners have been labelled as serious sport tourists who share a desire to travel to distant or unusual locations to participate in an event (Shipway & Jones, 2008). Building on our understanding of long-distance runners and their event travel careers, the current research seeks to advance theory by applying measures of motivation and involvement to participants of an iconic mass participation cycling event.

## **Methodology, research design, and data analysis**

The Tour of Flanders Cyclo is a single-day mass participation cycling event that is open to the general public and includes three routes that differ in length, intensity, and difficulty (namely 71, 129, and 227 km). An online, pre-event survey was used to collect data from participants at the 2016 edition of the Tour of Flanders Cyclo (N = 610). The survey instrument included 20 items that measured motivation and 15 items that measured involvement, using a 5-point Likert scale (Getz & McConnell, 2014). Behavioural indicators were measured by asking participants to list the number of cycling events they attended in the past 12 months and those they plan to attend during the following 12 months. Furthermore, other sport activities and sport events they participated in were recorded for analyses related to their event travel careers. Demographic data were captured with questions on gender, age, education, employment, subjective income, marital status, and number of children. The data will be analysed using SPSS (version 24). The validity and reliability of the motivation and involvement scales will be evaluated using factor analyses and Cronbach's alpha. Differences in motivation and involvement among subgroups will be examined using independent samples t-tests. Regression analyses will be used to examine the relationships among motivation, involvement and event travel careers.

## **Results, discussion, and implications/conclusions**

To date, the ongoing analysis revealed that respondents were almost exclusively male (94%), which reflects the actual gender distribution of the event participants. The average age among the respondents was 43 years and more than half of the respondents was in their thirties or forties. Findings from the survey further clarify that these men were highly educated and employed. The majority was living together with his/her partner and almost half of the respondents had children under the age of 18. About 40% of the respondents travelled internationally to participate in the event. More than half of the respondents were experienced event participants at the Tour of Flanders Cyclo. The survey revealed a high level of event participation among respondents, taking part — on average — in more than seven cycling events annually. The final results of this research will be available prior to the 2017 EASM conference. The findings are important, as a better understanding of event participants' motivation and involvement towards their sporting travel careers will have management and marketing implications for companies that organise mass participation events world-wide.

## References

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